respectable, independent and disinterested form. Unlike Bookers, which had no obvious commercial stake in Russia, the new sponsor, Smirnoff, was widely perceived as engaging in a very aggressive campaign to increase its share of the Russian market for vodka. The change of sponsor led to other regrettable changes: no more foreigners on the committee, which appointed several not very competent judges, who made some not very wise decisions which were criticized by professionals and which detracted from the reputation of the Prize. The 1999 award went to Mikhail Butov's novel *Liberty* (*Svoboda*), *Novyi mir*, 1–2 (1999), about a writer who feels no nostalgia for the communist past but is no less repelled by the current period of 'primary accumulation'. The judges' choice aroused neither strong criticism nor particular enthusiasm – another sign of the decline of interest in this Prize. This is partly caused by the recent proliferation of other literary awards: the Apollon Grigor'ev, the Solzhenitsyn, the modified and now more conventional Anti-Booker, the State and the President's Prizes (both of which now operate under new procedures), as well as several others which, though smaller, still play an important role in Russian literary life.

In conclusion, it can be claimed that the increasing number of these awards and the growing interest on the part of numerous publishers in contemporary Russian belles-lettres indicate that despite the protracted crisis in which Russia finds itself and the fact that literature is no longer a central feature of Russian life, prose fiction has not completely lost its social or artistic significance, and evidently will never do so.

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The novel's title thus denotes the hero's area of specialization, but it also alludes to society, the regime and the country which even heroes cannot 'break through' (the title in Russian means 'cage' as well as 'cell'). With its exciting plot, dynamic narrative and unusual characters, this work justly won the Russian Booker Prize in 1997.

Another notable work of the late 1990s is Iurii Davydov's *Bestseller* (*Znamia*, 11–12 [1998]). This well-known historical novelist returns here to one of his favourite heroes, Vladimir Burtsev, who exposed a good many agents provocateurs, including the notorious Azef, about a century ago. But Davydov also writes here about himself and his friends and acquaintances, with plenty of apparently idle chatter and humdrum details of contemporary daily life. Periodically the narrative breaks into rhythmical prose, and the story is interrupted by soul-searching and the philosophizing is tempered by irony. This is a new and unexpected departure for someone with the reputation of being a traditionalist. Here we should make a distinction between a writer's present-day popularity and publishing successes on the one hand and, on the other, his current participation in and contribution to the ongoing movement of literature. Several remarkable authors who set the tone in the Gorbachev period – Andrei Bitov, Vladimir Voinovich, Vasilii Aksenov, Fazil' Iskander and Liudmila Petrushevskaia, to name but some – have published their most recent works (as well as republishing older ones) during the last few years, but it is widely held that not one of them has really said a 'new word'. Yet at the same time less famous writers, such as Evgenii Popov, Mark Kharitonov, Mikhail Kuraev, Anatolii Naiman, Iurii Buida, Liudmila Ulitskaia, Galina Shcherbakova and Tat'iana Tolstaia, have continued to develop and to work productively and successfully, even though they may not have produced a truly seminal work for the end of the millennium.

When we speak of the prose of the 'middle generation' we again find ourselves talking about individual writers, not about groups, trends or movements. Even so, one can divide most middle-aged authors into those who by and large continue the classical tradition (no matter how complex, way-out and weird their texts might be) and those who demonstratively reject this tradition. At the same time it should be added that the space that at the beginning of the 1990s separated those writers who felt that literature should still address questions concerning morality, 'eternal values', 'the dialectics of the soul', etc., and those who preferred to deconstruct such concepts has now narrowed from a gulf to a gap. Postmodernist experiments are now looking less experimental. On the one hand Vladimir Sorokin, Vladimir Sharov and Viktor Pelevin are becoming widely published and even establishmentarian figures, and on the other hand features of postmodernist aesthetics can be found in a multitude of works ranging from highbrow novels through popular fiction to pot-boilers and trash. In 1998 'Ad Marginem' publishers produced a two-volume edition of the complete works of the 'scandalous' Sorokin, but the event passed off quietly and several erstwhile proponents of anything and everything postmodern wrote rather restrained reviews. Dmitrii Bykov, for instance, claimed in *Literaturnaia gazeta* (18 November 1998) that Sorokin was too 'functional' to

be a really important writer. Sorokin's 1999 novel *Blue Lard* (*Goluboe salo*) did create something of a scandal, not, however, because it crudely denigrates some of the most venerated Russian writers, such as Akhmatova, Pasternak, Mandel'shtam and Brodsky (Akhmatova literally licks Stalin's boots, Brodsky forces himself to swallow an egg laid by Akhmatova, etc.), but because of the publisher's protests about the unauthorized posting of the text on the Internet and the subsequent polemics on whether the demand to remove the text limited the public's right to freedom of information. The actual content of the novel did not arouse much interest, as the public had become rather tired of postmodernist games with 'alternative histories' (Pelevin, Sharov, Buida, Valerii Zalotukha, etc.), cloning (long ago a feature of SF), and the language of the future (in this case the large Chinese component was found to be heavy-handed and dull). Nonetheless the idea that blue lard, a mysterious substance produced by writers' clones during the creative process, is immune to change, indestructible and capable of changing history was new and unexpected, coming from the pen of a 'gravedigger of literature', as Sorokin is sometimes called.

The idea of the end of literature is a common one in postmodernist writing. In Pelevin's 1999 novel *Babylon* (*Generation P*), which quickly became unprecedentedly popular, the virtual world subsumes reality, as apparently real-life politicians, including the President, are actually 'created' in a TV studio. All the events covered in the news are in fact the product of the work of the scriptwriters and of complicated animational devices. In a way Pelevin's novel suggests that 'virtual' technologies have triumphed not only over literature but also over reality itself, although, paradoxically enough, the very fact of the novel's existence gives the lie to that suggestion. In contemporary Russian literature discourses on construction are much more vigorous and productive than discourses on deconstruction. We should draw the reader's attention at least to the names of a few more 'constructivist' writers, such as Andrei Dmitriev, Irina Polianskaia, Svetlana Vasilenko, Marina Palei and Aleksei Slapovsky, a highly productive writer from Saratov who has already been shortlisted for the Booker Prize more than once – including 1998, for his novel *The Questionnaire* (*Anketa*). That year many pundits rooted for Polianskaia, whose 1997 novel *The Passing of a Shadow* (*Prokhozhdenie teni*) tells of the interrelationships between a girl and a number of blind youths studying at a provincial music college. The narrative is periodically interrupted by flashbacks to the girl's childhood (her father, a scientist who has been incarcerated in Nazi as well as Soviet labour camps, was then working on an atomic project in a prison laboratory), to the drama of her parents' marriage, involving betrayal and self-sacrifice, to deaths and suicides – everything illustrates the tragic essence of the time she has lived through. However, neither Slapovsky nor Polianskaia won the 1998 Booker Prize (for a work first published in 1997), which rather strangely went to Aleksandr Morozov for a 'critical realist' novel in letters that he had written some thirty years earlier.

We should perhaps add a note here about the fate of the Russian Booker Prize, especially as 1998 was the last year in which it existed more or less in its original

'great Russian writer', and the only person who really fits the bill is still Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, despite the facts that he doesn't play an active role in 'literary life' and that all his major works have already been published. And for all its merits his most recent output – several two-part short stories and his essays on nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers, which show him to be an attentive and punctilious reader (all published in *Novyi mir*) – doesn't add anything qualitatively new to readers' perceptions of this phenomenal figure. Even his second volume of memoirs, about his life in the West (*Novyi mir*, nos. 9 and 11, 1998 and no. 2, 1999), aroused considerably less interest than its much earlier predecessor, *The Calf and the Oak* (*Bodalsia telenok s dubom*, 1975). Another claimant for the role of 'great Russian writer', Viktor Astaf'ev, won a number of literary awards in the latter part of the 1990s, published a great deal and produced several substantial new works. However, his output is extraordinarily uneven in quality, and on the whole he has been repeating what he had already told us earlier. His main themes are the war, not in its heroic aspects (as in most Soviet literature), but its everyday and repulsive sides, and the post-World War Two period, a time of disappointed hopes and bitter disillusionment – the 1995 and 1996 novellas *The Desperate Desire to Live* (*Tak khochetsia zhit'*) and *Overtones* (*Oberton*), and the novel *The Accursed and the Killed* (*Prokliaty i ubity*), begun in 1992 and not yet completed. Critics were particularly impressed by his novella *The Happy Soldier* (*Veselyi soldat*), in *Novyi mir*, 5–6 [1998]), about a man crippled in the war and then abused and humiliated by his own country, but who still remains a decent and honourable human being.

Another claimant to the title of 'great Russian writer' is Vladimir Makanin, who moved centre-stage in the second half of the 1990s as a, if not the, most important and productive writer. His novel *The Underground, or A Hero of Our Time* (*Undegraund, ili geroi nashego vremeni*) which, rather unusually these days, was first serialized in a journal (*Znamia*, 1–4 [1998]) before coming out as a book, marked a new stage in his development and was dubbed by Andrei Nemzer 'one of the best books of the decade'. The novel's protagonist, a writer who earlier functioned outside the Soviet literary establishment and later operated well away from the dissident and unofficial cultural scene when it was turning into the new establishment, not only lives in the recent and present metaphorical underground but also has links with the traditional Russian underground man as depicted by Lermontov, Dostoevsky and numerous later authors. This novel is a complex and weird mixture of naturalism and the avant-garde with elements of postmodernism. The stinking corridors of a hostel, which has been converted into an anthill of poky flats and where the protagonist lives (he hasn't managed to acquire a place of his own and only looks after someone else's), alcoholism, sex without love, jeering evil-tempered queues, dishonest traders, oafish policemen taking out their impotence on defenceless underdogs – all this is depicted in the greatest naturalistic detail. At the same time the hostel, with its endless corridors, rich and poor inhabitants and luxurious and tasteless apartments, is clearly a metaphor for society as a whole, as is the mental hospital where an artist of genius, the protagonist's brother, is confined after being 'cured' by criminal psychiatrists.

This work was discussed by critics for almost a year, and then two other novellas by Makanin appeared, *The Letter 'A'* (*Bukva 'A'*, *Novyi mir*, 4 [2000]) and *A Successful Story About Love* (*Udavshiisia rasskaz o liubvi*, *Znamia*, 5 [2000]). These works also contain some hints at Russian literary traditions and play with earlier literary models – without, however, jumping on the once fashionable bandwagon to deconstruct earlier authoritative styles; Makanin makes use of authoritative myths in order to give them a new lease of life. At first *The Letter 'A'* clearly resembles 'labour-camp literature' (prisoners, barracks, watery soup, armed guards, the construction of a railway embankment), but as the narrative develops it takes on more and more surrealist features. We have not so much the model of a camp as the camp as a model. The events of the last fifteen years are described with the help of a metaphor: the entire USSR was a concentration camp. During the first tentative years of *perestroika* the prescribed ways of doing things began to break down and then the whole construction collapsed. The inmates fondly imagined that shortly after the watch-towers and guards had been removed an era of prosperity would begin and that once the barbed wire was taken down social peace would automatically ensue. On the contrary, however, internecine battles lead to yet more corpses in the barracks, and the ferocious camp guards can no longer be blamed for that. The novella ends with a disgusting expressionist scene – the entire camp is covered over in excrement by vindictive people driven crazy by the period when 'everything is permitted'. 'It didn't bother them and it didn't pain them that the barbed wire and the posts were their barbed wire and their posts, or that the land was their land. . . . OK, other people, other generations will be living here, but we'll muck it up for them.' This harsh sentence imposed by Makanin on Russian society and the Russian intelligentsia puzzled many readers, because this work, like his other recent novella, is clearly about defeat and moral bankruptcy, the failure of an entire generation which dreamed of freedom but could not liberate itself internally, the failure of the proponents of the new ideology, the leaders of the new Russia.

When we speak of the writers of the older generation who have come into their own in the 1990s we have to give pride of place to Anatolii Azol'sky. Unable to start his literary career in the early 1960s in Tvardovsky's *Novyi mir* because his grotesque novella about the work of a Soviet scientific research institute was rejected 'for censorship reasons', Azol'sky didn't give up and finally managed to publish it a quarter of a century later, in 1987. By then it seemed to many to be dated, a leftover from the 60s, but the author, by now in his sixties and a naval architect by profession, persisted and proved himself to be an original and striking writer, publishing a string of novellas throughout the 1990s about the Soviet period, each time combining a graphic and grotesque picture of a nauseating world with a really gripping plot. One of the literary highlights of 1997 was Azol'sky's polysemantically-titled novel *The Cell* (*Kletka*). The protagonist, a brilliant geneticist who was persecuted under Stalin and still leads an impoverished underground existence, makes an astonishing scientific breakthrough in the pathetic laboratory he has created in his home – he works on the mystery of the DNA helix.

traditionally dominant current in Russian art. The other winner *Solo*, edited by Aleksandr Mikhailov, is aesthetically omnivorous, with traditional prose and poetry intermingled with experimental texts that are intended to shock. *Solo* quickly became a journal for new names in literature, and although it is unprepossessing in appearance and has a very small circulation it makes an important contribution to contemporary literature. In 1993 the 'small' Booker was awarded to the most promising short-story writer, deemed to be Viktor Pelevin, whose collection *The Blue Lantern* (*Sinii fonar'*) also included some of his novellas. Pelevin has perhaps received more critical attention than any other Russian writer of his generation, for he appeals equally to lovers of 'sots-art' (parodies of socialist realism), of the egocentric 'underground', and of Russian postmodernism. Pelevin's prose is dynamic, has a strong story-line, and is accessible to the reader at several levels. There is usually no clear dividing-line between fantasy and reality. In his novella *The Prince of the State Planning Organization* (*Prints Gosplana*) the world of computer games takes over from the real world; virtual reality replaces reality.

In 1994 the 'small' Booker Prize was awarded to the journal published outside Moscow and St Petersburg that had made the greatest contribution to Russian literature in the preceding year. The two strongest contenders were *Ural* (Ekaterinburg) and *Volga* (Saratov), both of which had been, until recently, typical Soviet provincial literary periodicals, but which by the end of the 1980s had used the opportunities presented by glasnost to publish hitherto banned writers and 'difficult' texts, sometimes ahead of their Moscow and Leningrad colleagues. *Ural*, which was showing strong postmodernist inclinations, published members of the 'Ekaterinburg wave' like the aforementioned Aleksandr Ivanchenko (short-listed for the main Booker Prize in 1992 for his novel *The Monogram*). *Volga* regularly printed local authors, especially the extremely prolific Aleksei Slapovsky (short-listed in 1994 for his novel *The First Second Coming* (*Pervoe vtoroe prishestvie*)), but also 'risqué' works by writers living in Moscow, such as Evgenii Popov's postmodernist *On the Eve of the Eve*. *Volga*, which finally won out against *Ural*, demonstrates that not all Russian literary life is concentrated in the two major cities and shows that a magazine published in the provinces does not have to be, in the pejorative sense, provincial. In the following year the 'small' Booker Prize was intended for the most deserving Russian-language literary periodical(s) still being published outside the Russian Federation. The winners were *Rodnik* (Riga, Latvia), which had played a very important role in the early years of *perestroika*, and *Idiot* (Vitebsk, Belarus), a new, small-circulation avant-garde journal, suggesting that Russian 'émigré' literature still has a future.

The Russian Booker Prize has generated a number of other developments. In 1993 St Petersburg writers founded the Peterbooker Award, which required all entries to be submitted anonymously in the hope of avoiding favouritism. The first winner was a literary outsider, a professional mathematician called Aleksandr Melikhov, for his novel *Out of Eden. The Confession of a Jew* (*Izgnanie iz Edema. Ispoved' evreia*, *Novyi mir*, 1 [1994]). Not only the subject-matter, the problems of national self-identification, but also Melikhov's mastery of language have made this

writer an important figure in the literary landscape. This prize was later renamed 'Severnaia Palmira' ('The Palmyra of the North'). The prize can now be awarded for any work of literature or literary criticism first published in St Petersburg (regardless of where the author lives) and/or for publishing activities in that city. The 1995 awards went to the St Petersburg poet Aleksandr Kushner (for his collection *On a Gloomy Star* [*Na sumrachnoi zvezde*]), the prose writer Feliks Roziner, resident in the United States (for his novel *Achilles on the Run* [*Akhill begushchii*], *Neva*, 7–8 [1994]), and to Feliks Lur'e for his documentary account of the life of the nineteenth-century revolutionary Sergei Nechaev.

Whereas this prize has only a symbolic value in financial terms, the 'Anti-Booker Prize' established in 1995 by *Nezavisimaia gazeta* brings the winner one dollar more than does the original Russian Booker Prize. The newspaper felt that the Booker judges (five in all, in office for only one year, each panel being made up of Russians and foreigners) had proved to be unable to appreciate 'new literature'. The first winner of the Anti-Booker Prize was, however, Aleksei Varlamov, for his traditional realistic novella *Birth* (*Rozhdenie*, *Novyi mir*, 7 [1995]), about the struggle of the parents of a seriously ill infant to save his life. This suggests that works deriving from the Russian realist tradition will set the tone for future developments. The answers to a questionnaire published in the last issue of *Literaturnaia gazeta* for 1995 are guardedly optimistic. No one prophesies 'the end of literature', although all admit that the role of literature in Russia is on the wane.

All the above-mentioned trends continued until the end of the century, but whereas at the beginning of the decade Russian literature was still alive and kicking, albeit in crisis, the end of the decade was rather flat. No new big names appeared, internecine literary struggles were half-hearted in nature, no-one went on insisting that traditional prose had had its day, avant-garde techniques began to look musty, and postmodernist omniverousness and corrosive irony no longer wrong-footed the reader but began to look stale and *déjà lu*. Print-runs of the literary journals continued to fall as the 'thick' monthlies began to lose their main function, that of being the best guide to new directions in the world of letters. Ever more writers chose to publish their longer works straight away in book form, as books can now be published within a month or two of submission of the typescript. Thus the long-promised death of Russian literature has not taken place, the gloomier type of predictions has gradually gone out of fashion, and the reanimation of the publishing industry has even prompted a certain optimism about the future. It is clear to all that the place of belles-lettres in Russian society has changed for ever, but the 'literary landscape' is still rather interesting and distinctive. As the critic Andrei Nemzer put it (*Novyi mir*, 1 [2000]), the 1990s was a time of 'individual writers' who worked 'without regard for current fashions and group values'.

Realistic prose, firmly based on the traditions of the Russian classics, had almost been elbowed aside a few years earlier by the *avant-garde* and postmodernism, but in the second half of the decade it made something of a comeback, confidently demonstrating the inexhaustibility of its resources. The public still craves for a

distinction was made by this time between émigré writers and works produced by authors living in Russia. Whereas the first years of *perestroika* saw the belated publication in Russia of older works by 'third-wave' émigrés, which had already come out abroad, journals in Russia itself since 1991 have been the first publishers of new works by émigrés such as Vasilii Aksenov, Vladimir Voinovich, Iuz Aleshkovsky, Fridrikh Gorenshtein, Georgii Vladimov, and Iurii Miloslavsky. (One should note that Russian émigré publishing houses and periodicals have lost much of their importance in the 1990s. Even though the print-runs of 'metropolitan' magazines and books are now much lower than in the Soviet period, the print-runs of émigré publishing-houses were and are lower still.) Critics based in the Russian Federation have until recently paid perhaps too much attention to, and been too indulgent of, émigré authors, even forgiving Eduard Limonov for his political eccentricity based on the dangerous combination of Bolshevism and Russian nationalism. The concept of 'the émigré writer' has been gradually disappearing, especially as most émigré authors visit Russia regularly, and little attention is devoted to where a writer spends most of his time. Among the most significant works written abroad and (rather than 'but') *first* published in Russia are Gorenshtein's novel *Place* (*Mesto*, 1991); Aksenov's *Moscow Saga* (*Moskovskaia saga*), chapters of which were published in *Iunost'* as early as 1991; Iuz Aleshkovsky's novella *A Ring in a Case* (*Persten' v futliare*), an ironic description of the literary world in the 1980s (*Zvezda*, 7 [1993]); and Sergei Iur'enen's *The Desire to Be a Spaniard* (*Zhelanie byt' ispantsem*), the story of the love of a Moscow student and a young Spanish girl (*Soglasie*, 7 and 8–12 [1993]). All these works were and are being read and analysed on a par with works written in Russia. It was therefore quite logical and no great surprise that the winner of the 1995 Booker Prize for the best piece of Russian prose fiction first published the previous year was a writer who happened to be living abroad, Georgii Vladimov. His novel *The General and His Army* (*General i ego armiia*, *Znamia*, 4–5 [1994]), about a talented military leader who falls foul of the Stalinist system, was regarded as an outstanding text and a significant literary event by almost all Russian critics, who were not concerned with where the author was when he was writing the novel.

The Russian Booker Prize, established in 1992, has had a positive impact on post-Soviet literature and its readership, and even helped to structuralize the Russian literary world, not least because the prize is awarded to the most deserving text, regardless of the status of its author. The first shortlist of novels and novellas (by Vladimir Makanin, Liudmila Petrushevskaia, Gorenshtein, Sorokin, Aleksandr Ivanchenko, and Mark Kharitonov) was in itself enough to dispel gloom about the 'crisis' of Russian literature in the early 1990s. Only the novel by Sorokin belonged clearly to the category of 'new' or 'other' literature. Ivanchenko's *Monogramma* (*The Monogram*, *Ural*, 2–4 [1992]), despite its postmodernist devices (such as playing games with Buddhist texts), rests firmly on the realist tradition. So does the winning book, Kharitonov's *Lines of Fate* (*Liny sud'by, ili Sunduchok Miloshevicha*) published in *Druzhba narodov*, 1–2 (1992). This novel also contains postmodernist elements, but is written for the most part in the Russian realist

tradition with more than a trace of the Western intellectual novel; the influence of Hermann Hesse and Thomas Mann is especially apparent (the almost unknown Kharitonov had translated both these authors). Having beaten the favourites for the prize, the much better known Makanin, Petrushevskaia, and Gorenshtein, Kharitonov found it much easier to publish his earlier and new fiction, and has thus become an established figure on the Russian literary scene. His 1995 novel, *Return from Nowhere* (*Vozvrashchenie niotkuda*), modernist rather than post-modernist, and set in a mysterious, possibly non-existent, world recalling Nabokov rather than Orwell, has confirmed his reputation as a master.

The 1993 Booker Prize was widely expected to be awarded to Oleg Ermakov for his novel *Sign of the Beast* (*Znak zveria*, *Znamia*, 6–7 [1992]), about Soviet soldiers serving in the war in Afghanistan in the 1980s, and questioning in the classical Russian tradition the purpose of the loss of life on both sides. However, instead of giving the award to the young writer from Smolensk, the judges chose the novella by Makanin, *Baize-Covered Table with Decanter* (*Stol, pokrytyi suknom i s grafinom poseredine*, *Znamia*, 1 [1993]). This work – far from Makanin's best – well describes the Kafkaesque surrealism of Soviet life, where an application to go abroad requires a public confession under torture. Makanin is a key figure in contemporary Russian literature, having moved away from his earlier dispassionate, realistic manner to experiment with new forms, such as science fiction (*Escape Hatch* (*Laz*), *The Long Road Ahead* (*Dolog nash put'*), and *The Captive of the Caucasus* (*Kavkazskii plennyi*). This last work, freshly and vividly written, graphically reveals the absurd metaphysics of war by turning the tables on classical Russian fiction set in the Caucasus, and focusing not on a Russian captured by locals but on a local man captured, loved, and murdered by a Russian.

The 1994 Booker Prize was awarded to Bulat Okudzhava for his auto-biographical novel *The Closed Theatre* (*Uprazdnennyi teatr*, *Znamia*, 9–10 [1993]). This unexpected choice (the focus of attention had been on two much younger writers, Petr Aleshkovsky and Aleksei Slapovsky) can perhaps be explained by the fact that both the style and the content of the work marked a new departure for the popular 70-year-old writer, known hitherto for his more sentimental and romantic songs and his historical novels set in the nineteenth century. The sympathetic portrayal of Okudzhava's relatives and their friends, communists who genuinely, if naively, wanted to 'remake the world' and institute a system of social justice, was a real challenge to the 'political correctness' of the last few years, which required such idealists to be depicted as absurd individuals and objects of mockery.

Apart from the main award, the 'small' Booker Prize (financed by an anonymous British benefactor) is also awarded annually, but each year for a different kind of literary activity. In 1992 this prize, which was split, was awarded to two new journals that had done most, in the opinion of the judges, to promote the development of the new Russian literature. One of the winners, the St Petersburg *Vestnik novoi literatury*, edited by Mikhail Berg, is a journal for aesthetes that sets itself not only against politicized Soviet criteria, but also against realism as the

1993 that there had not been any aesthetic revolution. The 'new' literature was being published in *Vestnik novoi literatury* and *Labirint* (St Petersburg), *Ekstsentr* (Ekaterinburg), later in the combined *Labirint-Ekstsentr*, and in the newspaper *Gumanitarnyi fond*, but all these publications came out in a small number of copies and seemed to arouse more interest among foreign literary specialists than in Russia (hence the ironic term 'literature for Slavists'). S. Chuprinin also felt by 1993 that the avant-gardists, whether postmodernists, Conceptualists or whatever else, had become academically respectable and *passé*, a striking change in attitude, as he had earlier been one of those who had placed great hopes on the 'new' literature. He named three authors currently working in the 'artistic danger zone' near the front line dividing and linking high culture and mass culture (*Znamia*, 9 [1993], 181–8): Viktor Pelevin, Evgenii Popov, and Anatolii Kurchatkin.

Pelevin's novella *Omon Ra* (*Znamia*, 5 [1992]), a mixture of science fiction and thriller, gloomily and ironically demythologizing the Soviet space programme, was the most striking literary debut of the year. He followed this with another novella, *The Life of Insects* (*Zhizn' nasekomykh*, *Znamia*, 4 [1993]), which, if less original, was no less powerful. Popov's remake of a Turgenev novel, *On the Eve of the Eve* (*Nakanune nakanune*, *Volga*, 4 [1993]), replacing the amiable landowners with squabbling dissidents who can think and talk of nothing but the KGB, shows that a writer associated with Russia's alternative literature from the time of *Metropol'* can still retain Chuprinin's sympathy (Pelevin too is regarded by many as a postmodernist, which shows how fluid are the dividing lines between one school and another). Kurchatkin's *The Guardian* (*Strazhnitsa*, *Znamia*, 5 [1993]), about a woman obsessed by Gorbachev, was lambasted by some sophisticated critics as nothing but kitsch.

There can be no doubt that Chuprinin's attitude was well-founded and widely shared. Most highbrow Russian critics, for instance, were cool and sceptical from the outset towards a work such as Viktor Erofeev's *Russian Beauty* (*Russkaia krasavitsa*). They regarded it more as an illustration of views expressed in his article, 'A Wake for Soviet Literature', and as a game with various artificial literary rules and regulations than as a new word in Russian literature. A number of foreign academic experts, however, were persuaded that Erofeev was a brave innovator who represented the beginning of a new wave in Russian literature.

Vladimir Sorokin is a more complex figure, who began to attract attention in the mid-1980s with his verbal virtuosity, sparkling originality, and bold detonations of ossified literary devices. Sorokin was better known abroad than in Russia until 1992–3, but after he was short-listed for the Booker Prize in 1992 (for *The Hearts of the Four* [*Serdtsa chetyrekh*]) it stopped being politically incorrect to disparage his works, and young as well as older critics were not afraid to 'come out' and state that they found his postmodernist rewriting of and attacks on the Russian classical novel somewhat tedious and dated, no matter that he was an undeniably gifted author.

In 1993 even a traditionalist journal like *Novyi mir* published a postmodernist novel, V. Sharov's *Before and During* (*Do i vo vremia*), in which the author plays

with history and literature in an intellectually provocative game. The narrator, a patient in a hospital where experiments are being carried out on his memory, asserts that the ascetic thinker Nikolai Fedorov (1828–1903) – the author of *The Philosophy of the Common Cause* – had an affair with Madame de Staël (1766–1817), which resulted in the birth of their child – Joseph Stalin (1879–1953). This postmodernist phantasmagoria would not have had such an impact if the journal had not printed a letter by two members of its own editorial staff, I. Rodnianskaia and S. Kostyrko, 'Washing Our Dirty Linen in Public' ('Sor iz izby'), containing an extremely strong attack on the novel, which the two editors viewed as a threat to the very existence of Russian literature.

In 1993 it also became apparent that it was no longer possible to use a term that had been very popular in Soviet times, 'the literary process'. Natal'ia Ivanova was one of the first to notice that in the minds of literary critics 'it has been replaced by "the literary situation" or, even more accurately, "the literary landscape" ' (*Znamia*, 9 [1993], 190). It is a landscape that is blurred and fuzzy, sadly lacking in harmony and charm.

The three major Soviet literary monthlies fiercely opposed to the introduction of liberal democracy to Russia, *Nash sovremennik*, *Moskva*, and *Molodaia gvardiia*, are still publishing today. *Nash sovremennik* supports the radical nationalists; *Moskva* favours the 'back-to-the-soil' movement and is seriously interested in the Russian Orthodox Church and Russian religious thought and philosophy; *Molodaia gvardiia* is closer to the (neo)-communists and particularly close to the armed services and the 'military-industrial complex'. Many of the works published in these three journals (for example Aleksandr Prokhanov's *The Last Soldier of the Empire* [*Poslednii soldat imperii*], *Nash sovremennik*, 7–9 [1993] and Iu. Kozlov's *A Geopolitical Romance* [*Geopoliticheskii romans*], *Nash sovremennik*, 11 [1993]) collapse and disintegrate once they are subjected to aesthetic analysis, but it is a pity that most professional critics completely ignore everything published in these periodicals. At least one of the stories published by Valentin Rasputin in *Nash sovremennik*, 8 (1995), for example, is a masterpiece. *V tu zhe zemliu . . .* (*Into that Selfsame Earth*), about an elderly woman who has spent her whole life working on the 'great building-sites of communism', who has only a minute pension and a wretched little flat to show for it, and who has to bury her aged mother secretly at night, shows that great literature can still be produced by people regarded by liberals and democrats as having completely unacceptable political views.

It cannot be excluded that, when the development of Russian literature in the early 1990s is seen in historical perspective, a significant place will be given to the prose of other 'nationalist' writers such as Vladimir Lichutin (1993 saw the publication in *Nash sovremennik* [nos. 10–11] of the beginning of his historical novel *The Way of the Cross* [*Krestnyi put'*], which forms part of his trilogy *The Split* [*Raskol*]), Vladimir Krupin, and Leonid Borodin. It is characteristic of this period (1993–5) that works published in 'right-wing' journals were simply not discussed by liberal and democratic critics and journalists. On the other hand, virtually no

of socialist realism? But if there's *no* official literature at all any longer, doesn't that mean a change in the status of 'different' literature?

The theoreticians of conceptual poetry and 'sotsart' (straight-faced parodies of socialist art) commended themselves for 'washing' words and concepts clean of the 'greasy fingers of the state'. The critic Aleksandr Arkhangel'sky said that these 'washermen' had fallen into a trap laid for them by 'official' art, since they could function only as long as it did. If it passed away, no one would understand or care what Igor' Irten'ev was making fun of in his verse (or what Melamid and Komar were sending up in their paintings). By the end of 1992 this was indeed largely the case, which for some members of the former 'underground' was more traumatic and harder to bear than their recent confrontations with the political authorities. The public was no longer interested in the writer's stance *vis-à-vis* the state, and many writers found that they could not operate in conditions of political (but not usually economic) freedom.

In the nineteenth century the critic Vissarion Belinsky introduced the idea of annual surveys of the latest belles-lettres. Between 1986 and 1990 a number of journals tried to carry on this tradition, but in the 1990s, because of the general crisis, this gave way to newspaper questionnaires. At the end of 1991 and the beginning of 1992 several publications, including *Literaturnaia gazeta*, *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, *Moskovskie novosti* and *Ogonek*, attempted to sum up the recent and current literary situation. The prevailing feeling among professionals was one of disappointment, all the harder to bear because of what had proved to be unfounded hopes of a cultural boom once Party tutelage was removed. Moreover, the predominant tone of the experts' forecasts was pessimistic. Lovers of realistic prose complained that contemporary fiction had lost the ability to find any sense or meaning in the current period. Recent supporters of the avant-garde (for example, B. Kuz'minsky) admitted that it had not met their expectations and that it was the least gifted of its practitioners who had become the market leaders and completely adjusted to the new situation. Yesterday's *aficionados* of postmodernism cannot hide their disappointment. Many of them agreed that the squabbles and in-fighting between and within groups and grouplets is having a deleterious impact on literature.

If we take a look at the analogous questionnaires filled in a year later, at the end of 1992, we find that the tone has changed substantially. Apocalyptic prophecies have disappeared. No one writes about the impending demise of Russian literature as a whole, or even of the collapse of literary journals in particular. Instead of gloomy forecasts there is a matter-of-fact recognition of a protracted crisis and a catalogue of successes as well as failures. There is an awareness that the cultural sphere has collapsed into a multitude of subcultures, each of which is more or less self-sufficient. The expectations are guardedly optimistic. What had occurred in 1992 to impart this feeling of hope? Had the literary critics got used to a state of crisis, or had the nadir been passed? An important factor was that not one single well-known literary journal published in Russia had folded; moreover a host of new journals had appeared, ranging from the narrowly professional (*Novoe literaturnoe*

obozrenie, *De visu*) to highbrow culturological (*Apokrif*, *Mirovoe drevo*, *Novyi krug*, *Logos*), and including ephemeral publications like *Chernyi zhurnal*, *Bezhin lug*, *Zlatoust*, *Bogema* and *Zolotoi vek*, the magazine of the Union of Graphomaniacs (and not to be confused with the splendid periodical with the same title published since 1991 by Vladimir Salimon and rather reminiscent of the aesthetic tastes of the Silver Age of Russian culture at the beginning of the twentieth century). Another initiative was the creation of an élitist Moscow–St Petersburg illustrated journal called *Russkaia viza*, which began by publishing the memoirs of Natal'ia Krandievskaia and fiction by Sasha Sokolov and Venedikt Erofeev. Some of the contents of some of these periodicals, as well as of other journals or magazines not listed here, can be regarded as 'the outcome of an epidemic of graphomania', but critics such as Alla Marchenko have a valid point when they state that it would be better to talk about 'the emission of vital energy', regarding the efforts to start up new journals at a time of such difficulties as proof of the inexhaustible literary potency still to be found in the Russian Federation.

In 1992 and 1993 the situation in book publishing was also changing. Whereas in the preceding years contemporary Russian literature appeared almost exclusively in journals, with book publishers concentrating on established works and popular foreign literature, by 1993 there was an increasing interest on the part of book publishers in contemporary Russian literature. Moreover, many Russian 'traditionalist' writers were recovering their self-assurance in the face of the failure of the avant-garde and postmodernism to attract the interest of the post-Soviet Russian readership. The 'alternative' literature mentioned earlier was providing very few new texts worthy of serious discussion, despite all the attempts to stage literary happenings and scandals. In 1992 many critics and writers discussed the harm being done by the much publicized book launches and other noisy public literary events intended to raise the profile and create an image of 'the writer', but in reality turning literature into a game, if not a farce. Equally characteristic of the time was the counter-attack mounted by, among others, Dmitrii Prigov, the maestro of Muscovite Conceptualism, who insisted that the image, gesture, and behaviour pattern of the writer mean no less than his *artistic* image. Disputing this, Ian Probshtein noted ironically that substituting the writer's image for his literary works must be very attractive for those who have few worthwhile texts of their own to offer, although it must be said that Prigov himself has a multitude of texts, individual lines of which have already turned into popular sayings, and one of whose characters, an ultra-loyal Soviet militiaman, has now become part of Russian folklore. Probshtein maintains that the present Russian avant-garde, for all its power of negation and attempts to shock, is derivative and imitative, adding nothing to what had already been done by the avant-garde in the early decades of the twentieth century. In his view, the 'new' avant-garde has failed to respond to the spiritual and creative requirements of the time and is unlikely to bequeath any texts of intrinsic significance to the future (*Literaturnaia gazeta*, 30 April 1993). There were similar assertions about (and occasional acknowledgements of) the low quality of most Russian postmodernist writing. As a result, it was obvious by

This has produced a new split in the world of the arts, not so much on political grounds (as, during *perestroika*, between supporters and opponents of reforms, between democrats and anti-democrats, monetarists and anti-monetarists), as on aesthetic and to some extent generational grounds. On 4 July 1990, *Literaturnaia gazeta* published an article by Viktor Erofeev called 'A Wake for Soviet Literature' ('Pominki po sovetskoi literature'), which proved to be the start of, and provided the basis for, a long-running discussion. Erofeev declared that all the texts generated by the Soviet system, whether supportive of or hostile to it, were now out-dated and irrelevant; what was needed was a different sort of literature, which did however already exist (and which we are inclined to trace back to Venedikt Erofeev's *Moscow Circles* [*Moskva-Petushki*], dating from 1969). The main features and the demarcation lines of this 'other' literature were extremely difficult to pin down, but it had to be politically uncommitted, devoid of moralizing and preaching, and to go beyond the boundaries of 'ordinary' realism as well as those of socialist realism. A tighter definition of this 'other' or 'new' literature was provided by Mikhail Berg, a theoretician of the artistic 'underground' and editor of the independent St Petersburg periodical *Vestnik novoi literatury*, founded in 1989 and setting its face against the traditional Russian and Soviet 'thick' journals. From the outset the magazine gave priority to three literary movements: religious poetry by Elena Shvarts, Viktor Krivulin, Sergei Stratanovsky, L. Aronzon, A. Shel'vakh, V. Filippov and others (Berg prefers to call this the 'Leningrad School of Poetry'); 'Moscow Conceptualism', with three of its four main pillars (Vsevolod Nekrasov, Dmitrii Prigov, Lev Rubinshtein, but not, so far, Vladimir Sorokin) and their precursors E. Kropivnitsky, Ia. Satunovsky and M. Sokovnin; and the 'new postmodernist prose' by B. Kudriakov, Viktor Erofeev, Evgenii Popov, N. Isaev, S. Korovin *et al.* (see Berg's article in *Znamia*, 1 [1995], 175–6). Berg defines this 'other' or 'new' literature as literature of the end (of the century, of an era, of a system) and as a 'literature without illusions', meaning not only social and political but also 'psychological and metaphysical illusions that result in a rigid attitude to human nature as such'.

Another much-discussed article was Aleksandr Ageev's 'Notes on the Crisis' ('Konspekt o krizise', *Literaturnoe obozrenie*, 3 [1991], 15–21), which insisted that the crisis in Russian literature was deeper and more comprehensive than it initially appeared, that this was linked to literature's claims to provide moral guidance, and that in the future the only books that could expect to gain the reader's attention were those that focused on the sphere of values of the private individual.

In the early 1990s another proposition was put forward, according to which the potential of all existing styles had been exhausted, a fact that would inevitably generate a literature that played with a variety of styles, as is typical of post-modernism. Considering the characteristics of postmodernism to be quotational and other meaningful references to other texts, a heightened degree of intro-spection, a propensity for commentating and self-documentation, a tendency towards syncretism, interweaving, and the fusion of a variety of art forms, V. Kuritsyn asserts – with perhaps more than a touch of irony – that the 'postmodernist

consciousness, continuing its decisive and derisive expansion, remains . . . the only aesthetically vital factor in the literary process' (*Novyi mir*, 2 [1992], 225–32).

Despite such attempts to define the issues, the vagueness of concepts like 'new literature', 'other literature', Conceptualism and postmodernism enables proponents of each of them to lay claim to adjacent territories or simply to try to take them over. One of the most talented members of the generation in its forties, Vladimir Sorokin, is claimed as 'one of them' both by the conceptualists and by the postmodernists. His novels *The Hearts of the Four* (*Serdtsa chetyrekh*, 1994), *The Norm* (*Norma*, 1994), and *Novel* (*Roman*, 1994) have delighted those who like his virtuoso game-playing with other styles and his extraordinarily inventive examples of sadism, and disgusted those who are not inclined to think that literature requires detailed descriptions of the consumption of excrement and pus or of how best to dismember corpses. Although writers like Mark Kharitonov, Viacheslav P'etsukh, and the distinctive St Petersburg author A. Melikhov have spoken publicly about postmodernism in very cool terms, that has not prevented some critics from discovering postmodernist elements in their works.

In 1990 and 1991 many critics who until then had written sympathetically about politically committed anti-Soviet belles-lettres switched their attention and preferences to the literary 'underground', which was then confidently coming up to the surface and moving onto the stage of public artistic life. Viktor Erofeev, Evgenii Popov, and others were then continually reminding people of the 1979 *Metropol'* almanac that had caused such a scandal at the time, even though it was intended not as an act of political defiance but as an aesthetic statement indicating that the boundaries of Soviet literature and the official style were not too narrow for the adequate expression of artistic freedom. Yet when, in 1991, this legendary anthology was finally published in Moscow, Pavel Basinsky, a young critic who had been brought up on tales about the importance of the volume that had acquired mythological status, wrote angrily that 'It would have been better if there hadn't been such a text . . . *Metropol'* is of interest only as a myth or as a historical reference work' (*Literaturnaia gazeta*, 19 [1992], 4).

Another point became clear in 1991. This 'new' or 'other' literature had seemed to constitute a single entity, but only because it existed in defiance of an official veto. In conditions of freedom some of its practitioners were perfectly capable of wrangling and bickering with their colleagues in full view of the public. Not long after Viktor Erofeev's article on the end of Soviet literature, Ol'ga Sedakova, a sophisticated and highly cultured underground poet who enjoyed experimenting in a variety of styles, commented that the entire generation of self-proclaimed writers of a supposedly 'new' literature, including Erofeev himself, belonged in actual fact to the 'post-Soviet' school. 'They have inherited the same old aesthetic irresponsibility. . . . It's simply disgusting. They are behaving like the generals of Soviet literature. For me they aren't anything new, they are the tail-end of Soviet literature. Its witches' sabbath' (*Gumanitarnyi fond*, 31 [1991], 3).

At about the same time, the practitioners of this 'different' literature were having to answer questions like 'Different from what?'. From the aesthetics and content

20

Post-Soviet Russian Literature

Alla Latynina and Martin Dewhirst

The year 1990, often known as Solzhenitsyn Year, since several of the main literary journals were then rushing to get out his remaining prose works in case the literary 'thaw' was succeeded by a new 'freeze', marked the end of both glasnost and of the literary boom that had begun in 1986. The publication of most of the *The Gulag Archipelago* (*Arkhipelag GULag*) in *Novyi mir* in 1989 meant that the official censorship system had finally been overcome, but it simultaneously signified the beginning of a new literary situation, wherein literature would have to exist in conditions of freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

This is what all writers who were in one way or another opposed to the regime had apparently been dreaming of, but few people then realized that official support for socialist realism was the prerequisite not only for 'approved' art and literature but also the precondition for the appearance of such diverse anti-totalitarian works as Vladimir Dudintsev's *White Robes* (*Belye odezhdy*), Anatolii Rybakov's *Children of the Arbat* (*Deti Arbata*), the novels by B. Iampol'sky, Iurii Dombrovsky, Vasilii Grossman, Aleksandr Bek, and others that had led to the literary boom at the beginning of the period of *perestroika*. All these works had been undermining the ideological walls surrounding the aesthetic field of the socialist realist novel, the validity of whose foundations these and other writers denied. When the walls finally collapsed, there was no need for other works of this type. Readers, who had been following the struggle of anti-establishment literature against the system of taboos and 'disapproved-of' themes, language, and forms with the intensity of spectators at a top-rated sporting event, quickly lost interest after it became clear that there were no more officially forbidden subjects or styles of writing.

In 1991 the last remaining 'bastions' were taken. Many people had felt that, because of the all-pervasive 'modesty trope' inherent in Soviet socialist realism, it was more likely that *The Gulag Archipelago* would be printed in Russia than Nabokov's *Lolita*, not to speak of Iuz Aleshkovsky's *Nikolai Nikolaevich*, containing large chunks of 'non-normative' language, and that, if some of the works by Vasilii Aksenov and by Eduard Limonov were passed for publication, then substantial cuts would be required. But in that year it was easy enough – at least in the largest cities of the USSR – to pick up a 'Soviet' edition of Aleshkovsky's novella as well as Limonov's novel *It's Me, Eddie!* (*Eto ia, Edichka!*). It was now the writers (and not the Party or the state) who would have the final say as to the language, as well as the form and content, of their works. There were no longer any words that had to be censored out of all printed matter.

The dividing line between the previous literary period and the present one was drawn by the failed coup attempt in August 1991 and the subsequent economic reforms introduced at the beginning of 1992. There were now virtually no official restrictions on what could be published (other than limitations of the sort found in the most mature liberal democracies), but henceforth the writers had to cope on their own with the vagaries of the chaotic free-for-all of the unregulated post-Soviet market.

One of the key signs of this problem is the critical state of the traditional Russian 'thick' literary monthlies. Subscription rates have not been able to keep up with galloping price rises in general, and the increasing costs of paper, printing, and postage in particular. Entire issues, completely ready to go to press, gather dust at the printers and reach subscribers and sales outlets several months late. The number of copies published and sold has been declining steeply. For instance, in 1990 the journal *Novyi mir* had a print run of 2,660,000, whereas the figure for 1991 (*before* the economic reform and concomitant price increases) was 958,000. This dropped in 1992 to 250,000, in 1993 to 74,000, in 1994 to 53,000 and in 1995 to 25,000 (most copies went to libraries, supported by a project of the Soros Open Society Foundation). Circulation is therefore considerably lower now than in the 'years of stagnation', prior to glasnost, when *Novyi mir* was printed in an edition of some 250,000 to 300,000 copies. (The figure for January 1996 was 30,200, but it had sunk to 20,570 in July. In October 2000 the print-run was 13,300.) This trend is characteristic of all Russian literary magazines. Readers now cannot afford and/or do not want to buy and read 'serious' writing.

There is also a general crisis in the publishing industry. State publishers have been starved of cash, and even contemporary writers who were popular in the *perestroika* period are experiencing difficulties in reprinting their earlier works and publishing their new ones. Most of the new private publishers, having successfully helped to weaken their state-owned competitors, are naturally driven mainly by the logic of commerce and the search for profits to give priority to bestsellers and pot-boilers, for which, as in all other countries, there is a ready market. At the same time, collections of works by authors such as Mikhail Bulgakov, Mikhail Zoshchenko, Andrei Platonov, and Boris Pasternak, émigré Russian writers (and philosophers) and, of course, the classics have proved to be commercially viable, so the more discerning reader has a wider choice than ever before. That, however, is of little comfort for contemporary Russian writers and literary critics unless they are capable of producing works that look as though they will immediately find a ready sale.

There is also a sense of a much more profound crisis than that manifested by the problems of the literary journals and the publishing industry – the widely perceived difficulty of the role and function of literature itself. Russian society no longer focuses on literature as a crucial orientating factor, and many writers, unable to adapt to a situation where they are no longer near the centre of public attention, feel that they are redundant and even that 'high' culture itself is surplus to society's present requirements.

lively, occasionally tumultuous background of literary politics, but had made a great contribution to the overhauling of an oppressive and murderous regime. The last few years of this regime were vitally important but also bewildering, as works from the past appeared alongside works by new writers, as socialist realism vied with modernism and postmodernism, as competing political ideologies made themselves heard through works that purported to be fiction. The overriding motif was that one world was over, but there was not yet another to replace it.

Perhaps the best illustration of this is to be found in the work of the avant-garde writer Vladimir Sorokin (b. 1955), whose two major novels *The Norm* (*Norma*) and *Novel* (*Roman*) were written in the 1980s, though published in full in Russia only in 1994. Sorokin's prose is distinguished by its eagerness to shock, disgust, and appal the reader with its unashamed preoccupation with bodily functions, dismemberment, cannibalism, and all manner of physical and verbal abuse. Sorokin subverts and destroys all symbols of authority, and his satire is particularly ferocious when directed at Lenin, the father of the Soviet state. Even linguistic conventions become mangled beyond recognition, and the language of the totalitarian state tears itself apart so that ultimately it becomes gibberish. Sorokin's prose rips away the falsity and pretence of a society built on lies and violence; but it leaves the reader staring into the abyss with no indication of a way out.

The four decades between the death of Stalin and the death of the Soviet Union proved to be cataclysmic not only for society, but also for its culture. Literature bore the brunt of those upheavals, with arrests, imprisonment, and exile of some writers, and the stagnation of the cultural process in general. Russian literature abroad flourished and developed alongside the hidebound home-grown product, continually enriched by the exiled individuals filling its ranks. In Russia, writers were increasingly drawn into social and political debate on the future of the country. By the late 1980s the contradictions of a freely functioning literary process and the needs of a one-party state had become irreconcilable. Whereas in 1953 an oppressive ideology had dominated literature, by 1991 literature had played a decisive part in its downfall.

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and Konstantin Vaginov. It did seem that Russian culture would at last become whole.

In 1988–9, though, glasnost assumed a qualitatively different aspect with the publication of Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*, and in particular Vasilii Grossman's novels *Life and Fate* (*Zhizn' i sud'ba*) and *Forever Flowing* (*Vse techet*). Grossman's works threw up a fundamental challenge to the whole edifice of Marxism-Leninism. They had offered so devastating a critique that the Soviet Politburo in the early 1960s had declared *Life and Fate* unpublishable for several centuries. It was clear that Soviet literature, if it could adapt and survive at all, would never be the same. Furthermore, 1989 also saw the re-emergence of works by Solzhenitsyn in Soviet print, and, together with works by other former dissidents and exiles, it now seemed distinctly possible that a few years of cultural freedom had fatally undermined an already demoralized and weakened totalitarian system.

Yet alongside the exhilaration of cultural revival there were other emotions stirred up. Nationalism in its various guises had been rearing its head since the 1960s, especially in the works of some of the Village Prose writers, who found a platform in the journal *Nash sovremennik*. The Village Prose writers surviving into the 1980s were now able to indulge their nationalistic tastes to produce controversial works of varying xenophobic and anti-modernist hues in Valentin Rasputin's *The Fire* (*Pozhar*) in 1985, and in 1986 Viktor Astaf'ev's *The Sad Detective* (*Pechal'nyi detektiv*) and Vasilii Belov's *The Best is Yet to Come* (*Vse vperedi*). Belov continued his cycle of novels on collectivization under the general title *The Eves* (*Kanuny*) and *The Crucial Year* (*God velikogo pereloma*), begun in 1972, with further instalments in 1987 and 1989 that became ever more vitriolic and anti-Semitic. On the other hand, the late 1980s saw the publication of both fictional and private writings by the recently deceased Fedor Abramov, especially his short story *The Journey into the Past* (*Poezdka v proshloe*), and by Vladimir Tendriakov, in particular the novel *Shooting at Mirages* (*Pokushenie na mirazhi*). Both had been respected, but hardly eminent, figures from the 1960s and 1970s, but now a thorough reappraisal of their reputations became necessary. They have emerged as free-thinking and courageous individuals whose best work, published only posthumously, exhibits great satirical power, a clear vision of the evils of their environment, but also anguish at being forced to live and work within an iniquitous system.

By the turn of the decade it was obvious that the Soviet state could not survive the monumental upheaval brought about by freedom of expression. Things were changing very quickly, not least the role of the writer and the importance of the written word. The role of the 'thick' journals, for over 150 years the main outlet for cultural production, was also changing. In the early months glasnost was enacted largely by the 'liberal' monthlies: *Novyi mir*, from 1986 edited by Sergei Zalygin; *Ogonek*, edited by Vitalii Korotich; *Druzhba narodov*, edited by Sergei Baruzdin; and *Znamia*, edited by Grigorii Baklanov. Soon, though, other journals not noted for their liberal leanings, such as *Moskva*, *Neva*, and *Oktiabr'* also got in on the act. Initially sales soared as people in their millions rushed to read the

latest revelations or long-lost works, and journals competed to publish previously banned pieces by émigrés or other established Soviet figures. However, in a time of worsening economic crisis, amid paper shortages and ever-decreasing resource allocations, some journals found life difficult. Nevertheless, despite straitened circumstances, most survived in one form or another and continued to prosper into the 1990s.

The amazing transformations in Soviet cultural life in the late 1980s had many consequences, most of them positive, but some, as with the resurgent nationalism, giving cause for disquiet. In addition, many new voices also came to be heard, including those of younger writers such as Tat'iana Tolstaia, Sergei Kaledin, and Valeriia Narbikova. More significant were the 'new' voices of older writers who were enabled to express publicly their true selves for the first time. These include Liudmila Petrushevskaia, who had published some short stories and plays in the 'stagnation' years, but among whose major works are *A Modern Family Robinson* (*Novye Robinzony*, 1989), and *Our Crowd* (*Svoi krug*, 1988). Others include Vladimir Makanin, whose first prose works appeared in 1967 but whose most powerful work was published only after glasnost, and Evgenii Popov, who had some short stories published in 1976 and, as a result of his involvement in the *Metropol'* affair, had been unable to publish for six years. He soon brought out two major novels, *The Soul of a Patriot or Various Epistles to Ferfichkin* (*Dusha patriota ili razlichnye poslaniia Ferfichkinu*, 1989) and *The Splendour of Life* (*Prekrasnost' zhizni*, 1990).

The year 1991 was a major turning-point in the history of Russia. Russian culture also underwent a profound and probably irreversible transformation. If we see the struggles of the post-Stalin period as a reflection of the creative desire, on the one hand, to gain freedom of expression and, on the other, the political need to subjugate the creative impulse to the demands of the state, we can also see that the resolution of this battle in favour of the former also brought to an end a particular feature of Russian culture: namely, its civic-mindedness. With the death of a totalitarian society and the birth of a democracy, no longer could the writer see him/herself as the moral guide or teacher of his people, bridging the vast gulf between the rulers and the ruled. Viktor Erofeev announced a 'wake' for Soviet literature in a celebrated article in 1990. Moreover, in the post-industrial age, the Russian writer, just like his western counterpart, now had to compete with varying forms of popular entertainment and information technology for the attention of an increasingly selective and informed reading public. In short, with what is regarded in the West as the 'normalization' of the creative process came the death of Soviet literature, and a severe challenge to the place and role of the writer in an increasingly diversified and pluralistic society.

In 1991 a world and a culture came to an end. Ideology had been defeated. Russian culture was united, the past had been overcome. The struggle, ongoing since 1953, for greater freedom had finally been resolved. The great themes of these decades – the return to nature, memory of the past and the correction of historical injustice, the call to human values – had been played out against a

in 1979 to Leonid Brezhnev, General Secretary of the Communist Party, for his autobiographical trilogy *Little Land* (*Malaia Zemlia*), *Rebirth* (*Vozrozhdenie*) and *Virgin Lands* (*Tselina*), published in print-runs of several million in 1978. All three were near-perfect examples of socialist realism, with stereotyped characters and hidebound plots. Within the Soviet Union there was an escalating tension between writers who struggled against increasing odds to keep alive the spirit of de-Stalinization, and the diehard writers and literary bureaucrats trying to maintain ideological hegemony in the spirit of the Brezhnev trilogy.

Censorship and ideological vigilance became ever more stifling. In 1979 a group of writers, including Andrei Bitov, Evgenii Popov, Fazil' Iskander, and Vasilii Aksenov, attempted to publish an almanac entitled *Metropol'* without the permission of the Writers' Union. The almanac included pieces by Popov, Aksenov, Iuz Aleshkovsky, Vladimir Vysotsky, and Andrei Voznesensky. For their involvement, Aksenov was forced into exile and Popov banned from further publication. However, the controversy surrounding the almanac, like that associated with *Literaturnaia Moskva* two decades earlier, ensured that the authors and editors achieved a degree of renown that would otherwise perhaps have eluded them. The almanac was immediately circulated among interested readers through that most Soviet of institutions, *samizdat*.[7]

In the 1960s and 1970s phenomena that could only have come about in a totalitarian state emerged: *samizdat* and *tamizdat*. By no means confined to artistic literature, *samizdat* ('for the drawer') was the publication and distribution of works that had either been banned from official publication or written with the express intention of not being officially published. Such literary works that circulated across the land in the 1960s and 1970s included all of Solzhenitsyn's writings, Venedikt Erofeev's *Moscow Circles* (*Moskva-Petushki*), Vladimir Voinovich's *The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin* (*Zhizn' i neobychainye prikliucheniia soldata Ivana Chonkina*), Georgii Vladimov's *Faithful Ruslan* (*Vernyi Ruslan*), and many others. As a result of appearing in *samizdat*, most works then appeared in editions published in the West, usually the United States or Germany. This was known as *tamizdat*, literally 'books published over there' (i.e. the West). In the case of the guitar poets, another phenomenon emerged. *Magnitizdat* was the recording on a tape-recorder (*magnitofon*) of songs that were then re-recorded and circulated across the land, thus bringing about the vast nationwide popularity of Vysotsky and Okudzhava, from the Baltic to the Pacific ocean.

There was, moreover, a fundamental struggle going on, one that sought to claim the soul of Russian culture. Both the literature of the Soviet Union and the emigration had long vied for the right to be the true legacy of the classical Russian tradition. Certainly, by the mid-1970s, the undoubted greats of the twentieth century were all living abroad: Nabokov, Iosif Brodsky, and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. Within a few years Nabokov, the last representative of a lost Russia, was dead, but the ranks of émigrés were being swollen with the 'third wave', representing the flower of the post-war creative intelligentsia: Vasilii Aksenov,

Vladimir Voinovich, Georgii Vladimov, Fridrikh Gorenshtein, Sergei Dovlatov, Aleksandr Zinov'ev, and many others. By the mid-1980s the Russian emigration boasted more genuinely reputable creative talents than the motherland.

One of the key works of Soviet Russian literature of the 1970s was Andrei Bitov's *Pushkin House* (*Pushkinskii dom*, 1978). Although published in Russia only in 1987, the novel explicitly places Nabokov within the Russian literary tradition, and denies that 1917 provided a break in the Russian literary process. The emphasis throughout is on continuity and evolution. Bitov's novel can be seen to have prepared the ground for the re-integration of Soviet and émigré cultures that began under Gorbachev.

The lifting of Party control of culture that accompanied Gorbachev's accession to power in 1985 was both exhilarating for the reading public and shattering for the hold of ideology on the minds, if not the hearts, of the population. Glasnost began rather cautiously, as was to be expected, with the publication in 1986–7 of poems by safely dead, though avowedly anti-Soviet, writers, such as Nikolai Gumilev and Vladislav Khodasevich, Vladimir Nabokov's novels *The Defence* (*Zashchita Luzhina*) and *Mary* (*Mashen'ka*), as well as some of his poetry and literary criticism. There were also major works by writers from the past who had at least been tolerated by the Soviet canon. Among these were the following major works: Mikhail Bulgakov's satirical and subversive *The Heart of a Dog* (*Sobach'e serdtse*), and many other plays and prose works; Andrei Platonov's anti-Utopian, and thus anti-Bolshevik, *The Foundation Pit* (*Kotlovan*) and *Chevengur*; Aleksandr Tvardovsky's childhood lament *By Right of Memory* (*Po pravu pamiati*), which discusses his kulak father's downfall during collectivization; Anna Akhmatova's *Requiem* (*Rekviem*), her great epic poem devoted to, and written on behalf of, all the women who suffered loneliness and loss during the Ezhov Terror of 1936–8; Nikolai Kliuev's epic poem *The Burned Ruins* (*Pogorel'shchina*), a highly original and linguistically-challenging account of the fate of the Russian village after the Revolution.

Another feature was the appearance of previously banned works by writers still living in the Soviet Union. These included Sergei Antonov's *Ravines* (*Ovragi*), an account of collectivization seen from the point of view of the activists who came to enforce it from the town; Bitov's *Pushkin House*; Vladimir Dudintsev's *White Robes* (*Belye odezhdy*), an account of the persecution of Soviet biologists in the late 1940s; and particularly Anatolii Rybakov's *Children of the Arbat* (*Deti Arbata*), concerning the beginnings of the purges and the individuals who took part in them or were affected by them. These works all raised hopes that the current Thaw would not stop at publishing merely a few selected authors and texts, as had been done on previous occasions. Moreover, this Thaw went much further than previous ones in the range of authors either discovered for the first time by Soviet readers, or authors whose work had only been partially known. Thus important writers, both from the emigration and from within the Soviet state, who became known to the Soviet reading public in these years include Leonid Dobychin, Mikhail Osorgin, Gaito Gazdanov, Boris Poplavsky, Georgii Obolduev, Evgenii Chirikov,

rural devastation since the collectivization of agriculture in the late 1920s, and an affirmation of the durability of an age-old Russian spirituality and moral goodness. This latter work is generally seen as the inspiration for the Village Prose movement that began in earnest a few years later.

In the Soviet Union culture was, of course, always linked with politics, but whereas under Stalin politics suppressed and perverted the creative impulse, after Stalin culture became the stimulus for critical debate, however muted, that then reinvented itself as public opinion. The anti-Stalinist messages in the poetry of Evgenii Evtushenko in the 1950s and 1960s warned against the dangers of a return to the old totalitarian ways. The guitar poetry of Aleksandr Galich, Bulat Okudzhava, and Vladimir Vysotsky reached a vast audience and inspired a generation of young people with its sheer accessibility and simplicity. The extremely popular plays of Aleksei Arbuzov, Eduard Radzinsky, and Viktor Rozov touched on topical problems of youth alienation and moral and spiritual stagnation, but, because of the official sanction of the theatre, could go no further than slight social criticism.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the cultural regeneration of the 1960s was the rediscovery of the past. A major contribution to this was the publication in instalments in the first half of the decade of Il'ia Erenburg's memoirs under the title *Men, Years, Life* (*Liudi. Gody. Zhizn'*, 1961–6), which introduced to the younger generation of Soviet intellectuals important names of which they would have had but a faint inkling: Marina Tsvetaeva, Osip Mandel'shtam, Vsevolod Meierkhol'd, Roman Jakobson, Kazimir Malevich, and many others.

It was in this area, as elsewhere, however, that prose fiction led the way. Village Prose emerged as a distinct literary trend that followed on from the socially-minded criticism of agricultural practice and management in the 1950s, and Solzhenitsyn's picture of a holy Russia not yet tainted with materialism and urban culture. Works such as Sergei Zalygin's *On the Irtysh* (*Na Irtyshe*, 1964), and Vasilii Belov's *Carpenters' Yarns* (*Plotnitskie rasskazy*, 1968), discussed openly for the first time the excesses and injustices of the collectivization of agriculture, and also created a climate in which issues of historical relevance could no longer be ignored. Collectivization became a popular subject for Village Prose writers, and for Belov, Boris Mozhaev, and Vladimir Soloukhin it became the cornerstone of their work from the 1960s up to the late 1980s. Even establishment figures such as Mikhail Alekseev felt bound to touch on it in such works as *The Brawlers* (*Drachuny*, 1982).

Village Prose was significant not only for its opening up of an important area of historical enquiry, but also for its discussion of the present. If socialist realism had emphasized man's dominance and conquest of the natural world, Village Prose presented in lyrical, contemplative images man's humility before it. In the 1970s, delight in the natural world became replaced by a concern for it as, in Viktor Astaf'ev's *King Fish* (*Tsar'-ryba*, 1976) and Valentin Rasputin's *Farewell to Matyora* (*Proshchanie s Materoi*, 1976), the consequences of Soviet man's attempts to remake the world according to ideological criteria had increasingly alarming implications for his moral, spiritual, and even physical well-being.

The moral state of the nation and the individual was of concern to writers interested in other areas of Soviet life. By far the most popular theme throughout the 1960s and 1970s was World War Two, and, although stalwarts such as Ivan Stadniuk and Aleksandr Chakovsky expressed pro-Stalinist sentiments and glorified the sacrifices made by the Russian people, others, such as Vasil' Bykov and Iurii Bondarev showed that the conflicts and losses of the past have far-reaching consequences for the present. Indeed, Bykov shows a murkier side to the Soviet war effort, depicting cowardice and treachery in *The Ordeal* (*Sotkinov*, 1970), and pointing to falsification and injustice in *The Obelisk* (*Obelisk*, 1972). One of his most powerful works, *The Dead Feel No Pain* (*Mertvym ne bol'no*, 1966), linked these negative features with the Stalinist legacy, and was severely criticized.

Another writer who courted politically-minded criticism was the leading exponent of so-called Urban Prose, Iurii Trifonov. He was concerned above all by the moral dilemmas of the post-war intelligentsia, especially that based in Moscow, revealing that the price for gaining material prosperity and status was moral compromise. In his Moscow stories of 1969–75 he shows weak, vacillating intellectuals who either capitulate to a cynical materialism, or are crushed. In his latter years he became increasingly outspoken, and in *The House on the Embankment* (*Dom na naberezhnoi*, 1976), he drew a bleak picture of the type of mediocrity who prospered under Stalin through the denunciation of others. It was a bitterly ironic portrait, and attracted criticism from the head of the Writers' Union, Georgii Markov. In subsequent works, such as *The Old Man* (*Starik*, 1978), he looked back as far as the Revolution and the Civil War in his search for the loss of contemporary idealism and values, and in the posthumously published *Disappearance* (*Ischeznovenie*, 1987), he showed the destruction of the Old Bolsheviks and their idealism during the Ezhov terror of 1937.

A new phenomenon in Soviet Russian literature was the emergence, from the mid-1960s onwards, of so-called 'women's literature', that is, fiction written by women, about women, and largely for women. With the publication in 1969 of Natal'ia Baranskaia's *A Week Like Any Other* (*Nedelia kak nedelia*), and subsequent novels and novellas by I. Grekova in the 1970s and 1980s, the 'double burden' of the working mother was brought home to the Russian reading public, as were the emotional and social difficulties faced by single mothers, widows, and pensioners. It was an acute social problem and, like the issue of collectivization, became the subject of heated public discussion through the medium of literature. Other important women writers who began to acquire a reputation in these years include Viktoriia Tokareva and Nina Katerli.

By the 1970s Russian literature was in dialogue with itself. Its soul had been profoundly affected by external events, such as the Hungarian uprising of 1956, the fall of Khrushchev in 1964 and the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, and there was within the intelligentsia disillusion with the prospect of liberalization, often bordering on despair. Political repression was mirrored in the cultural arena. Of considerable interest to Sovietologists, but rather less to literary scholars or observers of the Soviet cultural scene, was the award of the prestigious Lenin Prize

suppression of the Hungarian uprising that year. In particular, the campaign of abuse and vilification waged against Boris Pasternak following the publication in Italy in 1957 of *Doctor Zhivago* was a clear sign that the Party still insisted on its control of literature, and would continue to persecute those who chose their own path. Seemingly paradoxically, though, Tvardovsky was reinstated at *Novyi mir* in 1958. Nothing in Soviet literary politics was ever quite what it seemed.

Following the 22nd Party Congress in 1961 came the third Thaw, marked by the removal of Stalin's body from Lenin's Mausoleum and culminating in the publication of works by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn in 1962–3, especially *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (*Odin den' Ivana Denisovicha*) and *Matryona's House* (*Matrenin dvor*). Even in 1962, however, there were signs that the Party was not happy with cultural pluralism. During Khrushchev's unexpected visit to an exhibition of modernist art in the Manezh gallery he verbally abused some artists as sexual deviants and criticized modernism generally as decadent and antithetical to socialist realism. His words came to be seen as Party policy. The trial of the young poet Iosif Brodsky in March 1964 reinforced the idea that the Party was not yet prepared to accept any art that was not subservient to its ideology. With the dismissal of Khrushchev as General Secretary of the Communist Party in October 1964 de-Stalinization was brought to an end, and a tougher, less tolerant cultural policy took hold. Writers, artists, and intellectuals generally were made abundantly aware of this when in 1966 the writers Andrei Siniavsky and Iulii Daniel' were sentenced to seven years' imprisonment for printing their fictional and critical works in the West. In 1968 the writers Aleksandr Ginzburg and Iurii Galanskov were sent to the Gulag for protesting publicly about the Siniavsky-Daniel' trial (Galanskov died there in 1972, at the age of thirty-three).

Nevertheless, the death of Stalin had at least destroyed the monolithic sterility of Soviet literature. Even during the various Freezes, as the Party and its watchdogs struggled to contain new modernist trends, both 'conservative' and 'liberal' writers continued to coexist, albeit often uneasily, and both sides had their official supporters. Indeed, to a large extent culture as a whole became something of a political football, kicked about by both conservatives and liberals as part of a broader agenda. Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s there was debate and discussion, and the emergence of significant talents. Throughout the 1950s, for instance, there appeared a series of semi-fictional sketches (*ocherki*) and short prose pieces by Valentin Ovechkin, Gavriil Troepol'sky, Vladimir Tendriakov, Efim Dorosh, and others criticizing the calamitous state of agriculture and the pathetically low social level of the Russian village, and calling for reform and change. It was also in this period that writers such as Fedor Abramov, Vasilii Shukshin, Vasilii Belov, and Andrei Bitov, to name a few, began writing fiction that was heavily influenced by the spirit of the Thaw. Nevertheless, at the same time the arch-conservative Vsevolod Kochetov was publishing pro-Stalin pieces and anti-liberal tracts, such as *The Brothers Ershov* (*Brat'ia Ershovy*, 1958) and *The Party District Committee Secretary* (*Sekretar' obkoma*, 1961). The ideological battle-lines adopted by writers were reflected also in the stand-off

between literary journals, most notably that of the liberal *Novyi mir* and the conservative *Oktiabr'*.

Even under the more ostentatious repression of the Brezhnev years, writers such as those associated with Village Prose continued to push back the borders of the permissible. Indeed, by the time Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in 1985 and embarked on his policy of cultural openness and ideological pluralism, many forbidden topics had, in fact, already been broached, if not fully explored. Moreover, if in 1953 Russian literature was divided into two ideologically opposed camps – that of the Soviet Union and that of the emigration – by 1991 that distinction had all but disappeared. Emigré writers and their works, both those from the first emigration and those still alive, and therefore still regarded as 'hostile', became available in print to the Soviet reading public. After 1986 émigrés were invited to the Soviet Union, meetings between émigrés and Soviet writers and critics were officially encouraged, and public discussion of the culture of the emigration flourished. Even the greatest iconoclast of them all, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, was published, including that most damning indictment of the Soviet regime, *The Gulag Archipelago* (*Arkhipelag GULag*).

Let us return, however, to the 1950s, and attempt to penetrate the surface of significant events. To be sure, the death of Stalin seemed to change relatively little. Socialist realism remained the 'basic artistic method', and the vast majority of works published in the 1950s and 1960s conformed to the established model of the 'masterplot'. Even those that strove to pose difficult questions and thereby push back the frontiers of censorship, such as Il'ia Erenburg's *The Thaw* (*Ottepel'*, 1954), Vladimir Dudintsev's *Not by Bread Alone* (*Ne khlebom edinym*), and the controversial pieces in the second volume of *Literaturnaia Moskva*, did not question the legitimacy of Soviet power but merely raised questions of the excesses of Stalin's rule and the moral and spiritual consequences for society.

Indeed, the dominant motif of post-Stalin literature of the 1950s was the 'rediscovery' of simple human values and emotions, and the longing for a new, more humane society. Works that criticized the Stalinist legacy could do little more than reject the heavy-handed ways of the recent past and call for more tolerance and human understanding. Nevertheless, there was a clear shift away from ideology, and a new-found celebration of the little man and the simple pleasures of life. Perhaps nowhere is this better exemplified than in Vladimir Soloukhin's *A Walk in Rural Russia* (*Vladimirskie proselki*, 1958), simultaneously an affirmation of the joys and beauty of the unspoilt Russian countryside well away from the metropolis, and at the same time a triumphant re-discovery of Russia's historical (i.e. pre-revolutionary) past.

The first work that explicitly questioned the rationale of Soviet power was Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, a novella of blistering power that not only laid bare the raw facts of life within the Gulag, but also showed that the Gulag *was* the system. In the building of socialism, the Soviet people were constructing their own prison. The next year saw the publication of Solzhenitsyn's shorter *Matryona's House*, which is at the same time both a damning critique of

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19

Thaws, Freezes and Wakes: Russian Literature, 1953–1991

David Gillespie

If the 1930s and 1940s saw the dominance of socialist realism in all areas of Soviet cultural endeavour, the years following Stalin's death saw its inexorable decline and eventual death. Indeed, it was no longer the 'basic method' by as early as 1962, because a plurality of voices and styles had by then fatally subverted its monolithic hold on culture. Still, in the minds of Party ideologues socialist realism remained a valid cultural concept, and even as late as 1984 the Party General Secretary Konstantin Chernenko was calling for writers to return to the 'positive hero' as an inspiration for society. By then, however, such appeals were too late.

After Stalin's death writers did not need long to voice doubts and concerns over the Party's control of literature, and in the 1950s and early 1960s there were several Thaws, with writers at the forefront of liberal enquiry, and Freezes as the Party and its advocates took fright at the increasing demands for intellectual freedom and tolerance being voiced in the media. Thus, the first Thaw of 1953–4 was marked by the publication of critical articles in leading literary 'thick' journals. The period got its name from the title of a fortuitously published novel by Il'ia Erenburg, but it was criticism and publicism that then, just as thirty years later during Gorbachev's Thaw, were the quickest to react to changes in the political environment. Fedor Abramov's 1954 article 'People of the Collectivized Village in Post-War Soviet Literature' ('Liudi kolkhoznoi derevni v poslevoennoi proze') attacked the falsity of literary conventions in the depiction of rural Russia since the war, singling out for special criticism some of the most celebrated socialist realist novels (by Stalin Prize winners Semen Babaevsky and Galina Nikolaeva, among others). Vladimir Pomerantsev's 'On Sincerity in Literature' ('Ob iskrennosti v literature') denied the ideological prerogative of literature, and insisted on the writer's own personal intuition as the true mark of authenticity in a given work. Both articles were mercilessly lambasted in the conservative and Party press. As a consequence of publishing these articles, Aleksandr Tvardovsky was removed as editor-in-chief of *Novyi mir*, replaced by the loyal conservative Konstantin Simonov.

Another Thaw occurred in 1956, marked this time with the appearance of literary works. The publication of Vladimir Dudintsev's novel *Not by Bread Alone* (*Ne khlebom edinym*) and several controversial shorter pieces (most notably by Aleksandr Iashin and Nikolai Zhdanov) in the second volume of the almanac *Literaturnaia Moskva* (*Literary Moscow*) caused some anxiety to diehard literary bureaucrats, and seemed again to signal an easing of the cultural control mechanisms. However, they were again followed by a Freeze in the wake of the